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## Japan

**Post:** Osaka ATO

### Food Safety Seminar in Kobe

**Report Categories:**

CSSF Activity Report

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**Report Highlights:**

FAS Japan organized a food safety seminar in Kobe at the end of August 2012 with the cooperation from Japan Nut Association. The seminar was part of FAS Japan's ongoing effort to better educate the Japanese trade about U.S. food safety framework. Over 20 people from the nut industry attended the seminar and highly appreciated the opportunity.

## **General Information:**

ATO Osaka organized a food safety seminar on U.S. food safety framework in Kobe on August 29, 2012. The seminar was held with the cooperation from Japan Nut Association. ATO Osaka has been developing close relationship with the association over a long period of time. ATO Osaka presented the idea of holding a seminar on U.S. food safety framework for people in the nut industry and the association liked the idea and kindly agreed to coordinate the invitation of people to the seminar.

FAS Japan has been holding a series of food safety seminars in order to cultivate better understanding on the U.S. food safety system among the Japanese trade for some time. The presentation has been done by Dr. Sato, Agricultural Specialist at U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. This time, ATO Osaka coordinated with Dr. Sato and worked together to accommodate the issues and topics requested by the association into the presentation.

## **Outline of the seminar:**

- Date: Aug. 29, 2012 (14:00 – 16:00)
- Presentation: “Regulation and Practice of Pesticide Management in the U.S.”
- Speaker: Dr. Suguru Sato, Agricultural Specialist, U.S. Embassy in Tokyo
- Venue: Kobe Boeki Kyokai (Kobe Trade Association) Building, Sannomiya, Kobe
- Attendees: importers, wholesalers, and retailers in the nut business (21 people)

## **Presentation Gist:**



The presentation focused on two topics; 1) the regulation and practice of pesticide management in the US, and 2) FAS/Tokyo activity on Positive List.

1. In the US, agricultural chemical is regulated at various agencies in federal (EPA, FDA and USDA), state and county levels. Though the system is complex, the activity and roles in each agency are coordinated. Also, the industry sets self guided food safety practice at very high level, e.g., GAP and HACCP, which takes the significant role in food safety management. Though media tends to pick up food safety violation in imported food, the statistics shows the relative rate of pesticide violation by US produce is extremely low as 0.0035% (JFY2007). Both U.S. (USG and US industry) and Japanese importer can work together on risk communication so that Japanese consumer understands real aspects of US agriculture and its role in Japanese food supply.

2. FAS/Tokyo works proactively to avoid MRL violation in Japanese ports. Specifically, we facilitate the communication and data sharing between MHLW/FSC and US-EPA to harmonize MRLs. As most MRL violations occur in the commodity in which MRL is set or differs more than 10 times between the US and Japan, the harmonization of MRLs is important to prevent future violation. FAS/Tokyo also works on the violation which occurred in Japanese port. Based on US-Japan memorandum on the treating of MRL violation, FAS/Tokyo works with U.S. industry to lift up the sanction in the earliest convenience.

## **Results**

A survey was conducted at the end of the seminar to evaluate the response by the attendees. All the 21 attendees responded the questionnaire. The following is the summary of the result.

1. Are you satisfied with the seminar contents?

- All the twenty-one people replied that they are either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied.”
- Only two chose “No opinion, yes and no”

2. Was the presentation clear and easy to understand?

- Most people thought the seminar was clear and comprehensible with four responding to “very easy to understand” and thirteen to “easy to understand.”
- Only two chose “No opinion, yes and no” and one marked “hard to understand.”

3. Was the information provided in the seminar more than you had expected?

- Four responded that the seminar provided more than they had expected.
- Fourteen responded that it did as much as they had expected.
- Only two chose “No opinion, yes and no”

4. Which topics covered in the seminar were you interested in? (multiple choices)

- Fifteen selected “Positive List used by the Japanese government.”
- Seven people marked “US food safety framework”
- Another seven selected issues of MRL violation.

Looking at the overall result of the survey, it can be concluded that the most of the attendees were satisfied with the seminar and understood the topics presented in the seminar. There were a few attendees who did not respond. FAS Japan assumes that this was because some attendees were not involved in the food safety operation in their companies and were not familiar with the topics dealt in the seminar. The level of understanding of the issues raised in the seminar varied among the attendees. Some of them were quite well-versed with the topics and asked a lot of technical questions. This point may be considered when recruiting people for another seminar in the future.

There were numerous questions from the audience, following the presentation. They were mostly related to MRL violation cases and the Positive List by the Japanese government. They also showed concerns over how to deal with changes in MRL standards. Since all the attendees were from the nut industry, they had common interests and raised numerous questions. Q&A session, originally set for 15 minutes, ended up extending by more than one hour, which reflected the strong interest by the audience. At the end of the seminar, the

audience told that they learned a lot from the seminar and understood U.S. food safety system much better. ATO Osaka will continue its efforts to educate Western Japanese trade on U.S. food safety framework and actively seek the opportunity to cultivate better understanding on the U.S. safety efforts.